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DDI-4667-66

14 November 1966

DDI PERSONNEL COMMITMENT TO VIETNAM

1. This report is based on interviews with approximately twenty DDI employees. Most of them were employees from Vietnam here on mid-tour leave, during the last six months. The others had either recent PCS assignments in Vietnam, or were Headquarters employees who had been there recently on TDY. With this time span and the variety of experiences involved, there was some divergence of opinion. The report emphasizes the consensus of those with the most recent experience.

History

2. The first build-up in DDI personnel in Vietnam began during 1964 when there were five OCI and three ORR employees posted there. At that time, working and living conditions were relatively stable. Even then, there was developing the major problem of coping with thousands of information reports coming into the station with no real guidance on what to do with the information. Much of the information was and is worthless but it still needs to be sifted.

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3. As military action accelerated [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] this paper flow to Saigon assumed inundating proportions. At times, truckloads of documents were received weekly. After a survey team reviewed the situation, the DCI authorized a rapid build-up in personnel strength for Vietnam. The DDI became actively engaged supporting the build-up in September, 1965. The problem was that no one really analyzed and developed a system to cope with the mountains of paper. The solution that came about by default was that if enough people were sent to Saigon, they could cope with the paper. No one in the DDI, FE Division or the

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Vietnam Task Force could provide any firm information on the duties to be performed, and thus, on the qualifications of the people required. This resulted in a series of DDI vacancy notices with such nebulous qualifications as "thoroughly qualified in intelligence research and collation," and "patience to handle large volumes of incoming intelligence material." With these qualification requirements, ten DDI employees were selected for Saigon in two weeks. While all were interviewed in the DDI, FE Division, which was suppose to make the final decision, did not even talk with some of those they selected.

4. Those selected were sent out within a few weeks with just a few days training, at most. A majority volunteered for patriotic reasons. But many volunteered to make money, to escape the draft, or to get out of their job and/or office. This type of "selection," coupled with minimum guidance on what to do when they arrived, made for an extremely poor morale situation. By November the COS realized what he was getting and requested only those with political analysis and writing background. [REDACTED] the first Chief of the Collation Branch, worked hard to organize the work and train the new and inexperienced employees, but some of the better employees were on the verge of asking to be re-
turned when [REDACTED] arrived in January, 1966, and replaced him. [REDACTED] like [REDACTED] came from [REDACTED] and did not have a substantive background, but he did have a reputation as a firm administrator of large groups of employees. He set about further organizing the work, and attempted to use the limited skills of his employees in the best way he could.

Change in Functions

5. In theory, the Collation Branch was originally to support the Senior DDI Officer, [REDACTED] (See Tab A for organization.) He was too busy with his duties as briefer of the Chief of Station, the Ambassador and Chief of MACV to give the Collation Branch even a minimum amount of supervision. Although set up to support him, in point of fact, most of the time of the Branch ended up being spent in coping with their mounds of paper.

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6. Shortly before [REDACTED] left in June, John Hart reported as the new Chief of Station. After studying the situation, he removed the Collation Branch from under the DDI Representative, and established it in the Intelligence Division (see Tabs B and C). The function of the Branch is now defined as "analytical support for the station." Although still somewhat vague, this responsibility emphasizes what the Branch had been doing with the paper flow. But it also continues its role as a support office to the Senior DDI Officer.

7. As can be seen from Tab C, five of the DDI officers have been sent to regional headquarters. Here they screen information and report significant intelligence as well as provide operational support to the DDP case officers. The Research Section is responsible for doing long-range studies, particularly in economic areas. The Current Intelligence Section reviews material coming into the Branch and reports significant items. The other two units are a miniature OCR. To repeat, however, most of the actual time is spent on just processing the paper.

Problems

8. Without exception, everyone familiar with the situation in Vietnam talks about the vast improvements that have been made in the organization, functions and product of the Collation Branch in the last six months. But there are still basic problems which must be resolved, and there are some hard questions that should be answered.

9. Although there have been improvements, the people we sent out are still there. A point can be made that they are gaining valuable exposure and experience which will be useful to them, and hopefully, to us when they return. But the question is, can the Agency afford the luxury of training these people, many of whom were poorly selected in the first place? And, will we really get anything valuable out of this experience when they

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return? For show of force and other political reasons, it may not be possible to reduce the size of our commitment, at least not over night, but this seems worth exploring.

10. Closely allied to the size of our commitment is our mission in Vietnam. Is collation an essentially DDI type of function? It is certainly one of our functions, but it is also a DDP function. Coping with paper does not necessarily require a DDI background. Again, we may not be able to divest ourselves of this function, at least not immediately, because DDP is faced with the same shortage of manpower we are. Maybe their problem is even worse, and we will have to continue supplying willing hands, which of course, DDP is paying for.

11. One may also question the need for DDI employees to be in the regional headquarters where they are performing what is largely a reports officer's job. Again, we may have to continue this because the DDP has experienced severe difficulties in securing enough qualified reports officers for these jobs. A more important reason for continuing to fill these jobs, however, is that they provide access to information that we can get into DDI channels. There is a serious question of whether we would continue to have as ready access to this intelligence if DDI officers were not in the regions. Some of those interviewed believe this is so important that we should provide DDI officers for the regions even if the DDP puts reports officers there.

STATSPEC

12. A final problem with the Collation Branch is the kind of employee we should select when replacements become due beginning next spring. (Nineteen employees, not counting translators, [REDACTED] employees, complete their tours during 1967.) If we are not forced to maintain a large number of DDI employees in Saigon, we could undoubtedly provide a significant contribution with half of the twenty-four employees we have in the Collation Branch now. But this contribution would be possible only if we sent much better employees than we have in the past. They must be alert, intelligent and experienced political and economic analysts

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who are accustomed to and capable of independent work. Area knowledge is of far lesser importance if they have all of the other qualifications. The most critical need is to replace [REDACTED] with a senior political analyst of outstanding repute. A person of these qualifications is necessary to provide the urgently-needed guidance to the Branch. He must be able to foresee problems and plan research, and be able to support operations. The remainder of the employees could be drawn from OCI, ORR and the Biographic Register of OCR (which has already provided the best people, as a group). The hard decision to be made is whether we believe that the contribution we can make in Vietnam is worth the sacrifice of our best people from Headquarters.

13. The other question that has to be answered is what the proper function of our people should be. With well-qualified people, and if DDI employees are in the regions screening reports, those in Saigon could provide support to the operations of the station, as well as provide finished intelligence to Headquarters. To support the station, efforts should be concentrated on Viet Cong targets of interest to clandestine operations. Finished intelligence can take the form of papers on VC security, party structure, local administration and taxes; the economic situation in South and North Vietnam, etc. The papers can range from current intelligence reports, to daily sitreps to long-range interpretations of what is happening and why. DDI Headquarters will have to furnish guidance on what is needed, as well as what Headquarters is producing. But there appears to be a role in this area by being at the source of information which is available in the field but not at Headquarters.

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14. One final problem is that the Special Assistant to the Chief of Station and his assistant appear to have too much to do. [REDACTED] is reported to be working 15 to 18 hours a day. Part of this is the result of the rapid build-up in the Combined Intelligence Center (Vietnam). CICV now has one thousand people on its staff and is producing a large volume of information. A person familiar with the Vietnam situation to perform liaison with CICV would eliminate a great amount of duplicate effort that the station is now doing.

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Recommendations

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1. At an appropriate time--perhaps the [REDACTED] Conference in December--explore the idea of cutting back the professional strength in the Collation Branch from twenty-four to ten to twelve professional employees.

a. To avoid disrupting on-going work, this would be done by not replacing all employees as their tour expires in 1967.

b. Keep five or six employees in the regional headquarters.

c. The remaining six or seven employees would be in Saigon.

2. Select well-qualified and experienced analysts, especially with political and economic backgrounds, as replacements.

3. Define the mission of the Collation Branch as giving support to the station and producing finished intelligence.

4. Add a deputy to the Special Assistant to the Chief of Station.

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[REDACTED]
Acting Chief,
Administrative Staff, O/DDI

Attachment

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